

STEWART TREMONT.

The whaler Tremont, was with in two days' sail of Valparaiso, where Captain Cummings, her commander, intended to recruit, after having discharged a part of his cargo, which they amounted to eight hundred barrels of sperm oil. As great a rascal as ever trod a ship's deck was this Cummings. During the whole cruise he fed his men miserably, allowing each of them but half a cake of hard bread and one thin slice of salt horse at a meal. Sometimes, in a sudden fit of generosity, he would give them a little tea (vulgo dish water) to wash down their scanty, and by no means palatable allowance. The Captain, however, lived like a prince; he had the nicest and most tempting dishes prepared for his own table, which he devoured with the greediness of a wolf, and without allowing himself one sympathizing thought for his crew.

The Tremont had been fitted out for a three years' voyage by a certain ship-owner of New Bedford, a quaker, whose nobleness and generosity of character has won the love and esteem of whalersmen generally—I mean such of them as are before the mast. The captain and his officers are not included; with but a few exceptions they are generally a vulgar and tyrannical horde of men, who are devoid of all principle and honor, and wholly incapable of appreciating good qualities in another. As I previously remarked, there are few exceptions; but it is my opinion—and I speak from experience—they are very scarce. The name of the ship-owner to whom I have alluded it is not necessary to mention; but when I say that he fits out his vessels with an eye to the comfort of the foremast hands, as well as the officers, it will be readily recognized by sailor readers and the citizens of New Bedford.

The Tremont had been stocked by him with a plentiful supply of bread, flour and meat, together with many other articles which would have greatly contributed to the comfort of the crew. The good quaker then charged Captain Cummings not to put his men on allowance, but to make their condition as comfortable as possible, by freely distributing among them that which he put in the ship for their benefit. The captain promised, but it was the promise of a whaler captain, and the reader has already perceived how he kept it.

Captain Cummings was thirty years of age when he came in command of the Tremont. He wished to acquire the reputation of a careful and economical officer, and like the generality of his kind, thought the best way to accomplish this was to half starve his crew, which he accordingly attempted. We say attempted, because the villain did not succeed in his design; he was thwarted by his own steward—a noble-hearted youth, who went by the name of Charles Warner. This young man secretly conveyed provisions from the cabin to the fore-castle every night after the captain had retired. By this and many other acts of kindness, he won the love and esteem of the men forward, any one of whom would have perished and him in his cause. It was owing mainly to his influence that they were restrained from breaking out into open mutiny against the captain.

The personal appearance of young Warner was as prepossessing as the qualities of his mind. With his slight, graceful figure, and dark ringlets curling about a finely formed head, small feet, and delicate, white hands, he looked anything but like that which he was—the steward of a whaler ship.

Captain Cummings frequently wondered that his men submitted so patiently to the treatment they received at his hands, although it did of course please him that they did, and caused him to apply the rod of tyranny with still greater vigor. Having gradually sounded his crew, in order to see how far he might venture, and perceiving that they offered no resistance, he still continued to keep them on a short allowance of food, and to kick and thrash such of them as he could with impunity. Instead, however, of growing thin and pale, as he had anticipated, Captain Cummings was surprised to see his crew maintain as sleek and healthy a condition as though they subsisted on roast chicken, instead of the scanty allowance which it was his pleasure to provide them. Little did he suspect that they lived nearly as well as himself—that whole baskets of provisions were conveyed nightly from the cabin to the fore-castle by the very man in whom he placed too much confidence.

Thus matters went on day after day, and as Captain Cummings observed that his crew continued as strong and cheerful as ever, he began to entertain suspicion that something was wrong, and therefore determined to watch them narrowly. It is with the result of this scrutiny that I am now about to make the reader acquainted.

As was previously remarked, the Tremont was within two days' sail of Valparaiso. It was a beautiful moonlight night, and with a good strong breeze directly on her stern, the gallant vessel sped swiftly upon her way. Every ray of canvas which could be of advantage had been spread to catch a wind which promised to be of long continuance. Studding-sails on both sides projected their long booms out from the yards, and east fantastic shadows on the water beneath, which changed with every motion of the vessel. From the ponderous lower sails to the exquisite little royals (a whaler seldom carries sky-sails) arose a cloud of swelling canvas. Nothing can scarcely excel the beauty of a vessel going before the wind under all sail—and the Tremont was no exception. She was uncommonly well modeled for a "blubber hunter," and now as she dashed onward among the moonlit waters, and sent the white foam singing and dancing around her prow, she presented a proud spectacle.

The watch, consisting of some ten or twelve men, were lounging lazily about the deck—some of them near the bulwarks and others grouping about the fore-hatch, engaged in that best of all methods for whiling away the tedium of a watch—spinning yarns. The watch was already more than half out, when Jack Hall, after hav-

ing finished a rather "tough yarn," with which he had been regaling his shipmates, looked off, and then said in a low tone:

Boys, it seems to me it's time that Warner was along here with that basket. I'm getting hungry.

I don't see what can keep him away so long, said another of the men.

It's on account of that sneaking fellow aft there, he seems uncommonly wakeful to-night, answered one of the watch, pointing to the third mate, who was walking slowly up and down the quarter-deck, and who, we will inform the reader, usually dozed away half of the four hours of each watch.

Curses light upon him! exclaimed Jack. What can have got into his thick head tonight, that he don't go to sleep?

One thing's certain—if he keeps awake much longer we won't get no grub.—Warner won't of course venture out of the cabin while he's awake, for he'd blow on him right off to the captain.

Catch me in another whale ship when I get clear of this one, will you? exclaimed Jack Hall, energetically, biting a piece of tobacco from the plug which he took out of his pocket.

No, no, continued Jack, returning the tobacco to his pocket, you don't catch this boy in another such a scrape. The next time I ship I'll find out what sort of a man I'm going to sail under.

I don't believe that Cummings has a single good quality in his nature, said one of the watch.

I don't believe he has, neither, answered Jack. I've heard that he's going to get married when he goes home to the States.

How did you find that out?

The steward told me. He said that he was quainted with the gal, and that her name was Lucretia Manville.

If I was Warner I'd tell her all about the way the captain uses his men, when I got to New Bedford.

So he will, I guess, answered Jack; and I shouldn't be a bit surprised if he married the gal himself.

I don't see how she could help takin' a likin' to him, at any rate, answered one of the men.

Yes, answered Jack, and—

Look!—the booby's gone to sleep at last, interrupted one of the crew, pointing aft, where, with his head bowed upon his breast, the third mate sat upon the carpenter's chest, apparently asleep.

But this time the men were mistaken—the officers had received his orders from the captain and was only feigning sleep. Holding on to the spokes of the wheel with one hand, the man at the helm leaned towards the spot where he, (the officer) sat, and peered cautiously into his face, as though to satisfy himself that he slept. Apparently assured by the examination, he then stooped down and tapped three times at the cabin window in front of him. The next moment the form of the steward might have been seen emerging from the cabin with a large basket under his arm. Stealthily and swiftly he glided forward and deposited his burden among the men, who quickly carried it down into the fore-castle.

You are a true friend, Warner, exclaimed Jack, grasping the hand of the young steward.

I have only done my duty, answered Warner, the men shall not go hungry while I am in the ship. And taking the now empty basket from the hand of one of the seamen, the young man turned back to the cabin as stealthily as he came.

Fine doings, these—fine doings! I reckon the captain will be mighty pleased when he hears on 'em, muttered the third mate exulting in his own cunning. I suspected the steward all along, he'll have to suffer for what he's done I'll bet.

At last it struck eight bells, and as the senior lugs of Jack made the air ring with his "Starboard watch—ahoy!" the third mate sprang to his feet, and descended into the cabin to call the officer who was to relieve him. He awoke the second mate, and was just about ascending to the deck, when he heard the voice of the captain calling to him. He instantly obeyed the summons, and entering the captain's room found that the individual sitting up "en dishabille," in his bunk.

Well, said Cummings, have you found out anything yet?

Yes, sir, I have, answered the third mate, in that soft fawning tone, which is sometimes used by an under officer when he wishes to creep into the favor of his superior.

He then proceeded to give a minute description of all that he had seen, with which the reader is already acquainted.

You've done well, said Cummings, when he had concluded. I will give you a recommendation when we get into Bedford.

Thank you, sir, answered the sneaking cur, bowing himself out of the room, but in hand.

So, then, that's the way they manage, muttered Captain Cummings, as soon as he had gone, and my own steward, the last man whom I should have suspected, is at the bottom of it all. Well, he shall meet with his deserts. He paused a moment, and then continued through his clenched teeth, Yes, he shall pay dearly for this, I'll flog him within an inch of his life.

The next morning, just as the round red sun lifted his brow 'dise from the sea, and sent his rosy children dancing over the waters, the slumbering watch of the Tremont were aroused by the shrill hail of "All hands on deck!"

What in the—name is the matter now? It isn't eight bells by a long shot, growled one of the seamen.

Something's up, said another, or—

On deck, here, quick, you d—d beef eating machines! yelled the voice of the captain, at this instant, from the fore-castle scuttle.

In five minutes' time every man was dressed and on deck. All hands were then called aft and ranged on the lee side of the quarter deck. Captain Cummings leaned on the captain, and with a fiendish expression of countenance eyed each man in his turn for a few moments, and then said in a mocking tone of voice:

What a fat, sleek-looking set you are. I hear, that you have very good living. Now don't any of you turn pale—it will be time enough for that when every man of you shall be tied up and flogged.—Now, then, all I have to say is, that I have found out the trick you have been so long playing upon me, therefore, trem-

ble for yourselves! Then turning to his officers, he said—Bring up the—culprit!

The officers darted down into the cabin, and the next moment reappeared with the steward between them. A murmur of surprise broke from the crew, for the face of Warner had undergone a strange alteration. His skin which had hitherto been of an olive cast, was now as white and delicate as that of a young girl. The captain started back suddenly, and turned as pale as death, then recovering himself a little, he fixed his eyes upon the face of the steward, as though he could there trace a startling resemblance to some person he had seen before.

Phaw! it's only my fancy, he muttered, at length. And then turning to the officers, he exclaimed: Away with him—the him up in the rigging!

As he spoke, the captain drew a piece of double rattle staff from his pocket.

Boys, let's pitch into them, don't let's stand and see our best friend flogged, said Jack to the men.

The officers had by this time advanced to execute the order of their superior, but drawing himself up to his full height, the steward exclaimed:

Hands off!

The voice was of a woman! The officers started back, and the next moment the pretended steward lunged off her hat, and a shower of raven curls descended upon her shoulders.

Lucretia Manville! exclaimed Captain Cummings, sinking down upon the steerage hatch.

You are right, said Lucretia advancing toward him. I am she—she whom you supposed was quietly awaiting your return at New Bedford, and who was once your destined bride—but who, thank God, is no longer. Never—never can I give my hand to such a villain! Captain Cummings, I love you no longer, you have forfeited my esteem forever. They told me New Bedford that you ill-treated your crew. I wished to be convinced of it, and accordingly, disguising my voice and appearance, I succeeded in entering this ship as steward, where I have become convinced that the reports I heard about you were true. By washing off the substance with which my skin was dyed, I have produced this change in my appearance. I shall take passage for home when we arrive at Valparaiso, and hope hereafter that you will never again trouble me with your presence.

On the next day the ship arrived at Valparaiso, and was anchored off the harbor. Lucretia then bade adieu to the crew of the Tremont, and took passage on board a steamer, which finally reached the United States in safety. Captain Cummings shortly afterwards found a grave in the belly of a huge sperm whale on the off shore ground. And now, then let us end with three hearty cheers for the young steward of the Tremont.

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